

It's not too late to change

The original April fool was the devil! He thought he had killed God, only to have Jesus rise from the dead three days later!

In our own lives, we have all been made fools of by the devil. At times, the world, the flesh and the devil do indeed seem more attractive than God. But, as we enter this last week of Lent before Holy Week, we need to realize that it's never too late to change.

We want to change, not only for our own sakes, but for the sake of others. As I mentioned in my column last week, about the survey of people's religious identification, many people choose to disaffiliate with the church because of the hypocrisy and sinfulness of Christians.

As the old saying goes: "When I do good, no one remembers. When I do bad, no one forgets!"

Being a Christian has been described as a "splendid burden." It's splendid in the sense that we have a unique relationship with, and understanding of, our God. We believe in a God who died for us, who bears our burdens and forgives our sins, and who wants us to live forever with him. That's splendid.

The burden is that the way of God is not always the way we would want to go. We would prefer Easter without Holy Week, prefer resurrection without the cross, prefer life without having to die first. We would like to remake God in our image and likeness, not allow God to remake us in his image and likeness. As someone humorously said: "We all like to talk to God, but we would prefer to be in an advisory position!" Like the apostles who tried to prevent Jesus from going to Jerusalem, we would all prefer the way of life without the way of the cross.

So, however much we find ourselves unlike God this late in Lent, it's still not too late to change. In a wonderful brochure put out for the Catholic community of Oak Crest, there is this first line from "Change My Heart": "Take my heart, O God, and make my life brand new. Change my heart, dear Lord, so I can be like you."

Despite our darkest fears, being like God is really our deepest desire. Our hearts really are restless until they rest in God.

In that same Oak Crest brochure, there is this following prayer. It's a prayer not just for this week, or Holy Week, but for any week. It goes as follows:

"Lord Jesus, gentle and wonderful God, truly awesome and ever present Holy Spirit:

"In my grief, be with me and change my heart.

"In my anger, be with me, and change my heart.

"In my pain, be with me and change my heart.

"In my doubt, be with me and change my heart.

"In my wrongful passions, be with me and change my heart.

"I am sorry for all my dark emotions, so change me into your likeness.

"Change me into your likeness so I may walk in your joy.

"Change me into your likeness so I may walk in your peace.

"Change me into your likeness so I may walk in your serenity.

"Change me into your likeness so I may walk in your certainty.

"Change me into your likeness so I may walk in your holiness.

"All these things I humbly pray in the name of my most blessed Lord, Jesus Christ, my mighty God, and my ever-present Holy Spirit, upon I can rely. Amen."

At Christmas we sing, "It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas." Pray that this Easter we can say, "We're beginning to look a lot like Christ!"